

in their minds should be conducted about trivia; but when we are talking about important issues of war and peace and the lives of our young people and the national security, somehow it becomes inappropriate to engage in the democratic debate that is at the nature of our governance.

But we have an additional witness to the argument that Iraq remains sadly unsafe in many places for this government and its supporters, the United States government. And we are not just talking about Fallujah or the Sunni Triangle. We are talking about Baghdad. We recently had, and I read this in the New York Times last Thursday, a wire service article, the United States government last week, or at least I learned of it last week, recently gave asylum to a 15-year-old Iraqi girl who asked for asylum on the ground that her support for the American military made it unsafe for her to live in Baghdad.

In other words, we now have an official recognition by the United States immigration officials that being a supporter of the American military in Baghdad is so dangerous as to justify the extraordinary act that is a grant of asylum. This is not critics of the administration saying that. This is not Fallujah. This is Baghdad. This is a sad statement, and I am terribly troubled by this. I am glad we gave this young woman asylum given those circumstances.

A young woman who expressed her support for the American military now tells us that it is unsafe for her to go to Baghdad. Well, if in fact things are calmer, let us talk about an election. They are going to have an election throughout the country. Baghdad is one of the places where we are told things are fairly secure.

Well, if it is secure enough to have a free election, why is it so insecure as to say that a 15-year-old has to be given asylum in the United States because it is not safe for her to remain in her own country because she sided with America.

What is clear is that the result of the Bush administration's Iraqi policy has been a sad deterioration, in my view, of the true national security policy of this country; and the misinformation, the self-delusion, the inaccuracy, the infighting, the inconsistency that have marked this policy have resulted in a very, very sad situation. And as long as the President and his chief advisors insist on defying reality and blaming the messengers who bring forward the evidence of this sad reality, it is unlikely that things will get better. The self-deluded are rarely the self-correcting.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 23, 2004]

U.S. ASYLUM FOR IRAQI GIRL, 15

WASHINGTON—A 15-year-old Iraqi girl who claimed persecution in Baghdad because her family cooperated with the United States military has been granted political asylum here. The case is believed to be among the first instances of an Iraqi seeking political asylum in such circumstances.

The girl and her mother, who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation against other family members still in Iraq, received the letter on Thursday from the Citizenship and Immigration Services, according to Jeff Sullivan, their Washington lawyer. The girl came to the United States last year with her mother for treatment of a cancerous growth in her cervix. The two subsequently applied for political asylum. The mother is pursuing asylum for the father and three other children still in Baghdad, Mr. Sullivan said.

FREE ELECTIONS FOR IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I find it very interesting and probably somewhat unusual that during morning hour debate three speeches in a row are on the exact same topic.

I listened to the statement of my friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS). I just listened to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK). And I will state that it is important for us to spend some time engaged in debate and focusing on the very important elections that are going to be taking place on October 9 in Afghanistan, and then as was said earlier, six days later the registration process begins for elections that are scheduled to do take place in Iraq this coming January.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) earlier referred to an op-ed piece that actually is what led me to come to take the well this afternoon and that is a piece by David Brooks in today's New York Times in which he talked about the challenge that lies ahead as we deal with the prospect of elections, as I said, on October 9 in Afghanistan and then elections to take place in Iraq. But he used a historical context which I think is very important.

That historical context does go back to March of 1982 when we saw the elections take place in El Salvador. Now, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) and I were elected to the House together in 1980. And during that decade we saw great struggles take place, really throughout the world as we saw nations move from totalitarianism to self-determination, political pluralism. Of course, we saw that in the latter part of the 1980s in Eastern and Central Europe. Really throughout most of that decade we saw the struggle take place in Central America, in primarily Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In El Salvador it was in large part a civil war, a civil war that was fueled with resources that came from Communists in the region and from the Soviet Union, but it still was an upheaval that was taking place. And yet in 1982, as Mr. Brooks pointed out in his piece today, with 75,000 lives being lost, an attack taking place on the national

palace, people actually bombing those in line standing to vote, elections proceeded.

There was a statement that he has in this piece in which he says that one person who was in line said, "This nation," in referring to El Salvador, "may be falling apart, but by voting we may help to hold it together."

Now, it is true that things have not gone perfectly in the war to liberate the people of Iraq. Everyone acknowledges that. But this is a war. There are no guarantees. There are no there is no absolute certainty. But we do know this: Saddam Hussein is no longer in power; and if he were still in power, if he were still in power he would be providing, as the international terrorist that he was, \$25,000 to the families responsible for the bombings of buses that took place in Israel just a few weeks ago. And he would be involved in the kinds of repressive policies and the threat to destabilize his region and other parts of the world that he had been involved in.

We do know that we brought an end to that. There still are terrorist forces in Iraq. But I will say, Madam Speaker, that as we head to this election on October 9 in Afghanistan and then in January in Iraq, it is important to know that it is not going to be a perfect election.

We learned in 2000 that democracy is a work in progress. But as we begin with these elections in October and January, it is very important to note that that will be the beginning point as we move down the road towards the right of people to choose their own leaders, self-determination, political pluralism, the rule of law, those democratic institutions which we have a tendency to take for granted here in the United States.

So I would like to say, let us learn from history. Standing firm to proceed with some kind of election is the right thing for us to do. And I am very pleased that this administration and a majority in this United States Congress are dedicated to doing just that.

DISARRAY ON IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, how can we expect President Bush and his administration to win the war in Iraq if they continue to deny the realities our troops and the Iraqi people face on the ground?

Last week provides several examples of a Bush administration in disarray: Cabinet officials contradicting each other on a daily basis and a President who continues to live in denial. Not only is the President in denial, but his hand-picked Iraqi Prime Minister appeared to be reading off the exact same page when he visited Washington last week.